

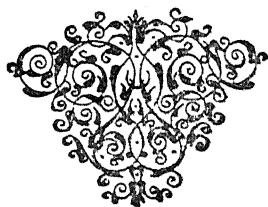
BENN'S SIXPENNY LIBRARY



# A HISTORY OF WESTERN EUROPE

1815-1926

By D. C. SOMERVELL, M.A.



LONDON: ERNEST BENN LIMITED  
BOUVERIE HOUSE, FLEET ST. E.C

*First published 1928*

MADE AND PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY  
BILLING AND SONS, LTD., GUILDFORD AND ESHER

# CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION - - - -	5
II. THE PEACE AND ITS MAINTENANCE, 1815-1848 -	8
III. THE REVOLUTIONS OF 1848 - - -	17
IV. NAPOLEON III. AND THE UNION OF ITALY, 1852-1860 - - - -	23
V. THE MAKING OF THE GERMAN EMPIRE, 1861-1871	30
VI. BISMARCKIAN EUROPE: THE ISOLATION OF FRANCE, 1871-1890 - - -	40
VII. THE GROUPING OF THE POWERS, 1890-1907 -	48
VIII. THE EVE OF THE GREAT WAR, 1907-1914 -	52
IX. THE GREAT WAR, 1914-1918 - - -	61
X. THE TREATIES, 1919-1924 - - -	67
XI. BEGINNINGS, 1918-1926 - - -	74



# A HISTORY OF WESTERN EUROPE

## CHAPTER I

### *INTRODUCTION*

MANY of the wise men of the Ancient World held that the history of Man goes round and round in a circle; that though the actors change and pass, the events themselves in their essentials are repeated like the figures in a recurring decimal. This view is no longer acceptable, yet the history of Western Europe for the last four hundred years might be adduced as an argument in its favour. Four times over, at intervals of just over a hundred years, a single Great Power has sought an ascendancy which made it intolerable to its neighbours, and thereby provoked a coalition which, backed by British sea-power, secured its defeat. Round about 1580 the offender was the Spain of Philip II.; round about 1700 the France of Louis XIV.; a hundred years later the France of Napoleon; and in our own day the Germany of William II. From the British standpoint the heroes of the successive struggles for European liberties were Drake, Marlborough, Nelson and Wellington, and—who shall we say? Perhaps “the Unknown Warrior” is the best answer for a democratic age.

We might pursue our cyclic theory rather further, and apply it to the intervals interposed between the

## 6 A HISTORY OF WESTERN EUROPE

four decisive struggles. Each "interval" seems to fall into three sections: a period of maintenance of the peace; a period of "halfway wars" centring round Germany; and a second period of peace in which signs of the approaching storm may be retrospectively discerned. In the first "interval" we have the peace period that may be associated with the name of that muddle-headed peacemaker, King James I.; the Thirty Years' War; and the long diplomatic period, broken by wars, indeed, associated with the name of William of Orange. In the second "interval" we have the peace of Walpole; the wars of Frederick the Great of Prussia; and the calm preceding the storm of the French Revolution. In the third "interval" we have the long peace extending from Waterloo to the Revolutions of 1848; the wars of Napoleon III. and of Bismarck; and the "armed peace" that culminated in 1914. The fourth "interval" has now begun with the peace of the League of Nations. Will the cyclic movement continue? We have no reason to suppose that it will. There is always a screw loose in the most neatly constructed of historical parallels. Sooner or later the screw comes out and the parallel breaks down.

These introductory remarks suffice to indicate the subject of this book. We have to pursue the history of Western Europe through a cycle and a little bit more. We start with the Great Peace concluding the Napoleonic Wars; we follow the story of the long maintenance of the essential features of that peace against various agencies which sought to overthrow it; we reach its decisive breakdown, and a remodelling of the European State system in the generation of Napoleon III., Cavour, and Bismarck; we enter upon

a second period of maintenance of the peace, the Peace of Bismarck; the Peace of Bismarck being a polite name for the Ascendancy of Germany, we approach, enter, and emerge from the Great War; once again we are at a point closely analogous to that at which we started; we conclude by following the history of the maintenance of the peace of 1919 to the point at which history hands on the torch to prophecy.

The title of this book is *A History of Western Europe*, a term that can be variously defined. We take it here to include France, Italy, and Germany; it obviously does not exclude Holland and Belgium, Spain and Portugal, but these are not Great Powers. Our principal study will be the development of France, Italy, and Germany, their relations with each other, and with their other neighbours. Great Britain, Russia, Austria, Turkey, and the rest will inevitably intrude themselves into our narrative, and at times assume leading parts in the drama. When "Western Europe" concentrates on the "Eastern Question," the historian of Western Europe must focus his attention on Constantinople. But France, Italy, and Germany will not cease to be his subject.

The history of Europe can be viewed from many angles. It would be possible to write a history in which international politics were thrust into the background and Europe treated as a single cultural and economic unit. It may be assumed, however, that the first, if not the last, interest of the ordinary reader is in international conflict and co-operation. That will be the subject of this book.

## CHAPTER II

*THE PEACE AND ITS MAINTENANCE*

(1815—1848)

IN the spring of 1814 the Great Allied Powers, Great Britain, Austria, Prussia, and Russia, had Europe at their feet. At long last "the Revolution Militant" had been made to bite the dust. That was the real name of their enemy—not France, but "the Revolution," or, if you preferred, Napoleon, which was another name for the same thing. Napoleon was sent to St. Helena, a measure which, it was hoped, disposed of "the Revolution." France had been the victim of the disease, and, as the disease had manifested itself as homicidal mania, precautions against a further outbreak had to be taken. But the convalescent patient was to be kindly treated, and it might be hoped that the cure was complete.

The first mark, then, of the post-Napoleonic treaty settlement is the generous treatment of the enemy nation. In a democratic age such as our own we pay a nation the compliment of assuming it to be responsible for the actions of its government; we made that assumption at the expense of the German nation in 1919. But the Allied statesmen of 1815 were anything but democrats; it was democracy that they had been fighting against. They did not think in terms of nations. France belonged to the Bourbons, and was now restored to them intact, with its pre-revolution frontiers; to do less would have been an injustice to the Bourbons, who had done no wrong and suffered



much. A small indemnity, together with an Allied occupation, was imposed in 1815, but only as a penalty for the relapse from virtue, which is known to history as "the Hundred Days."

It remained to redraw the map of Europe. The first general principle of the treaty-makers was restoration, "legitimacy" as it was called, the returning of stolen property to its hereditary owners. Their second general principle was the rewarding of the allied Great Powers for their good work in suppressing "the Revolution." These two principles might seem to conflict, but the problem of their conflict was capable of solution. For example, republics had no "legitimacy," seeing that there was no hereditary owner to claim them. Thus, the territory of the ancient Republic of Venice passed as reward to Austria, linking the main body of her territory with the Duchy of Milan, which was restored to her as having been her property before the Revolution. Three hundred minute principalities of Western Germany had no legitimacy visible to the naked eye. Most of them were pooled in the provinces of Westphalia and the Rhineland and became the reward of Prussia, who would also have liked Alsace and Lorraine, but England and Austria held that these belonged of right to the French Bourbons. Poland again had no legitimacy. True, it had been robbed of its very existence—but the robbers of Poland were not in the dock, but on the bench. Most of Poland became the reward of Russia. Great Britain's reward was all the colonies she wanted; no one else wanted overseas colonies at that date. Belgium had belonged to Austria, who no longer wanted it; it was given to Holland, in accordance with a favourite scheme of

Pitt's. Genoa had been a republic, and was given to the Prince of the House of Savoy, who was called King of Sardinia, and ruled the Italian province of Piedmont—to the ancestor of the King of Italy, in fact. It was hoped that the enlarged Holland and the enlarged Piedmont would prove obstacles to French aggression—but they did not. Norway was transferred from Denmark to Sweden, to reprimand an ally and reward an enemy of Napoleon. In Italy, south of the Po Valley, and in Spain and Portugal no exceptions had to be made to the policy of restoring legitimate dynasties. In Germany again legitimacy prevailed apart from the extinction of the three hundred and the enlargement of Prussia. Henceforth there were thirty-nine German States. The Austrian Empire counted as a German State, though the bulk of its territories lay outside Germany; Prussia covered half Germany; next came Bavaria, Hanover, Saxony, and the rest, most of "the rest" being insignificant satellites of Austria or Prussia. The whole thirty-nine were bound in a German Confederation, the ghost of the Holy Roman Empire, with a Diet of Frankfort, at which the Austrian Chancellor took the chair.

Such was the settlement embodied in the Treaties of Paris and Vienna. Many have blamed and few have praised these treaties. It is easy to be wise after the event, and to say their authors were blind to the future. Napoleonic imperialism had not been defeated by the diplomatic combinations of legitimate dynasties; victorious over these again and again, it had met its match in the outraged patriotism of nations—in Spain, in Russia, and, last of all, in Germany. The

theorists of the French Revolution had imagined that democracy would mean cosmopolitanism. Whether it would have done so had its gospel been peaceably preached, we cannot say. Preached from the mouth of French cannon, it had begotten nationalism. Nationalism was to be the driving force of the nineteenth century, and the statesmen of 1815 either ignored it or believed they could suppress it. Yet it is not so certain that the statesmen of 1815 are to be condemned. Nationalism was to be the force of the future: the authors of the settlement were concerned with the present, and to treat the present as if it were the future is to treat a child as if he were a man. The enactment of a nationalistic map in 1815 would have deluged Europe with new wars. The despised settlement of Vienna gave peace for a whole generation; and the troubles of that generation were caused much less by the terms of the settlement than by the conduct of some of the restored rulers.

It is one thing to make a settlement, another thing to maintain it. To secure this further object the architects of the peace, Great Britain, Austria, Prussia, and Russia, bound themselves in a Quadruple Alliance to maintain the Treaties of Paris and Vienna for twenty years, and they further agreed to hold Congresses at fixed periods to discuss matters "of common interest." Our English Castlereagh was the author of this proposal. The Tsar Alexander of Russia held that it was not enough, and he persuaded nearly all the monarchs of Europe, great and small, to bind themselves together in a "Holy Alliance" of mutual peace and Christian love. We may say that the Tsar was quite right in intention. A new spirit was needed—"the

League spirit," as we call it to-day—as well as new international machinery. Unfortunately, it soon became apparent that the Tsar's idea of mutual peace and Christian love meant the maintenance of the divine right of every despot to govern wrong and the suppression of every liberal movement in Europe. It remained to be seen whether Castlereagh's Quadruple Alliance would be captured by the Tsarist policy.

And so the new age began. Let us first follow the decline and fall of the experiment of Congressional control. In 1818 the Congress of Aix admitted France, who had paid her indemnity, to membership of the Alliance, henceforth Quintuple. In 1820 the Tsar demanded a Congress, which met first at Troppau, and afterwards at Laibach, to deal with the revolutionary movements that had broken out in Spain and in Naples. Each of these States was misruled by a restored Ferdinand of Bourbon, and it is hard to say which of the two Ferdinands was the more intolerable incubus upon his subjects. This situation raised at once the conflict between the British and the Russian policies of international control. Castlereagh held that the Alliance existed to maintain a territorial settlement, and that systems of government within the territories allotted were outside its sphere. The Tsar, on the other hand, stood for a strict trade-unionism of despots. Metternich, the Austrian Chancellor, held that Italian revolutions were a special interest of Austria. So far as Italy was concerned, he demanded neither European interference nor no interference, but Austrian interference. Castlereagh and Alexander accepted the compromise, and a Ferdinand was re-imposed upon Naples by Austrian bayonets. In 1822

a Congress of Verona considered the affairs of Spain. Once again the Tsar desired to lead a European crusade, but Spanish revolutions were found to be a special interest of France, and French bayonets re-imposed a Ferdinand upon Spain.

The Congressional system was working badly. Its ruin was achieved by the emergence of an insurrection in the east and a statesman in the west. The brilliant Canning succeeded the patient Castlereagh, and adopted the policy of "every nation for itself, and God for us all!" a phrase which seems to have sounded better a hundred years ago than it sounds to-day. The insurrection of the Greeks against Turkish rule, widely advertised throughout Europe by the final exploit of Lord Byron, gave Canning his opportunity. Austria and Russia could never agree upon a Balkan question, for they were the rival fishermen in those troubled waters. The new Tsar Nicholas agreed with Great Britain and France to make a naval "demonstration" in Turkish waters. The demonstration led to the battle of Navarino, and Russian armies did the rest. A small nation secured its independence, and a great experiment in international technique was terminated. Henceforth European Congresses were summoned from time to time, usually after a war, but the system of periodic Congresses to avert wars was abandoned.

Meanwhile, France seemed to be settling down comfortably, and even the French may find comfort a fair exchange for glory. Democracy, so far as it had ever existed, was gone, but liberty—for example, liberty of the Press—prevailed in a manner unknown in the days of Napoleon or of the Jacobins. Unfortunately, Louis

14 .A HISTORY OF WESTERN EUROPE  
XVIII. died and gave place to his brother, Charles X., a change much like that suffered by England when James II. succeeded Charles II. For Louis XVIII. had known where to stop, and Charles X. did not. France at this time had a parliament, with an extremely restricted suffrage. After an unfavourable election in 1830, Charles dissolved parliament before it met, muzzled the Press, and in consequence found himself an exile in England. His cousin, Louis Philippe, Duke of Orleans, reigned in his stead.

This "July Revolution" in itself concerned France much more than Europe, but when Belgium caught the infection and declared herself independent of Holland, the foundations of European peace began to totter. Here at last was a clear breach of the territorial settlement of 1815, and at a vital point; for Belgium cut loose from Holland was regarded as little better than a dependency of France. A party in France was demanding annexation, and a party in Belgium offered the Belgian Crown to a son of Louis Philippe. Happily the unfriendly attention of Russia, Prussia, and Austria was distracted by an insurrection in Poland. Palmerston, now beginning his long career as Foreign Secretary in Great Britain, was determined to secure Belgian independence against the claims of both Holland and France. Louis Philippe and the aged Talleyrand, serving the last of his many masters as ambassador in London, were ready to agree with Palmerston and to play for safety. The final result was the neutrality of Belgium, under the admirable King Leopold of Coburg, guaranteed by the "scrap of paper" treaty in 1839.

Germany was a kind of international microcosm,

and here, at any rate, was an active and functioning League of Nations, or rather of States, in the Diet of Frankfort. By means of his chairmanship of this Diet the Austrian Chancellor, Metternich, succeeded in establishing his position as a kind of High Tory Providence to all Germany. The Carlsbad Decrees of 1819, following on some trivial riots of university students, enacted that the government of every German State should forbid the publication of any journal or pamphlet without a licence, and that commissioners should be established to control the teaching in universities. Political stagnation overspread most of Germany, and particularly Prussia, where the government of Frederick William III. presented despotism in a favourable light. Administration was honest and economical, and education, though politically censored, excellent; thoughtful Englishmen often called attention to it in contrast with the glaring deficiencies of their own country in this respect. Moreover, Prussia was unobtrusively laying the foundations of her future empire by the establishment of a Customs union (*Zollverein*) of free trade between herself and the smaller States. Metternich was an old-fashioned, uncommercial statesman, and paid no attention to such things.

As Europe passed into the eighteen-forties, it might have seemed that the statesmanship of 1815 had built a durable edifice. Metternich was supreme in Vienna, and his influence extended over all Germany and Italy. The Tsar had crushed the Poles. The Sultan had been rescued by the Great Powers from the clutches of Mehemet Ali of Egypt. Monarchy, with a highly exclusive bourgeois parliament, maintained its posi-

16 A HISTORY OF WESTERN EUROPE  
tion in France. In England the Great Reform Bill had fulfilled the forecast of its shrewdest supporters, and entrenched the authority of the propertied classes much more strongly than before; Chartism had failed. In Spain and Portugal unending disturbances had no particular result.

Yet this reading of the situation would have been superficial. The forces of nationalism and liberalism (which, in nineteenth-century Europe, means parliamentarism and democracy) were alive and growing. Governments could not stop people thinking, though as yet active political thought was more or less a monopoly of the middle classes. In Italy the secret society of the Carbonari cherished the principles of the French Revolution in their purest and most destructive forms. Mazzini was preaching the doctrine that nations are "moral unities"; he was so optimistic as to suppose that when once the rights of nations to free self-development were recognized, there would be an end of criminal ambitions and aggressive wars. He did not realize that nations overlap, and that the supposed extra-territorial needs of the nations would turn nationalism into imperialism. In France the discomforts of the industrial revolution had bred socialism, and Louis Blanc was writing voluminously and confusedly about the Right to Work.

In fact, Louis Philippe's throne was never secure. He existed, but he did not take root. The extreme caution of foreign policy cast a romantic halo around the memories of the first Napoleon; a fact not unnoticed by the wandering exile who was his nephew, and was to be Napoleon III. In February, 1848, a trivial quarrel between Louis Philippe's government



PEACE AND ITS MAINTENANCE. 17  
and the Liberals, who desired an extension of the franchise, precipitated a Parisian revolution, and Louis Philippe followed Charles X. to England. The French Revolution of 1830 had fired Belgium and Poland: the French Revolution of 1848 was to fire all Italy, Germany, and Austria.

### CHAPTER III

#### *THE REVOLUTIONS OF 1848*

THE revolutions that broke out in such surprising numbers in the spring of 'forty-eight were all "liberal," in that they demanded organs of democratic self-government; and all nationalist, in that they sought to expel the foreigner if there was a foreigner to be expelled, and to unify or liberate nationalities. In Germany and Italy nationalism made for unity; in the Austrian Empire it made for "home rule," or separation. Impossible here to describe even in outline these enthusiastic ebullitions of long-pent-up political energy. Suffice it to say that long before midsummer all the princes of Italy had either granted "constitutions" (often unworkable) or fled from their dominions, or both; that Austrian Italy had risen against the foreign garrison and installed national governments in Milan and Venice; and that Charles Albert of Piedmont had declared war on Austria in the national cause; that Metternich had fled from Vienna, and both the Magyars of Hungary and the Czechs

18 A HISTORY OF WESTERN EUROPE  
of Bohemia had secured grants of home rule from his distracted successors; that Frederick William IV. of Prussia, the most theatrical and unsubstantial of the Hohenzollerns, had not only granted a constitution, but gone in procession round his capital with the revolutionary flag of black, red, and gold, which since 1918 has been the flag of the German Republic; that the minor princes of Germany had done much the same, each in his own way; and that a German national parliament had assembled in Frankfort to make the constitution of a new, united, and liberal Germany.

And what next? It might seem that all was over—a “revolution without tears.” Yet in fact that radiant morn was already passing away.

The acid test of revolutions is their effect upon regular armies. Military discipline is a form of hypnotism; it creates among those subjected to it a public opinion quite different from that of the civilian population from which the soldiers, often against their own will, are drawn—a public opinion strongly in favour of obeying the orders of official superiors. Is the revolutionary fever hot enough to melt the iron of military discipline? The French Revolution of 1789 had accomplished this feat, and consequently carried all before it. The revolutions of 1848 did not. The Emperor of Austria and the King of Prussia recollected that they had armies and might use them.

At the same time the revolutionists were embarrassed by the uncertainty of their aims. Was Italy to be a monarchy ruled by the King of Sardinia? Charles Albert was an eleventh-hour convert to parliamentarism, and the republicans, Mazzini and Gari-

baldi, would have none of him. Was Germany to be a republic or a monarchy, a unitary or a federal State? If a monarchy, was Austria or Prussia to provide the monarch? Were its frontiers to include German Austria? Was Hungary to be a close preserve of the Magyar minority? The Magyars certainly thought so, and the Serbs of Southern Hungary were converted to counter-revolutionism, preferring an ancient and tolerably paternal Hapsburg dynasty to the racial arrogance of Magyar *Sinn Fein*, as preached by Kossuth.

And so the old armies began to act. In June an Austrian army occupied Prague and ended Czech home rule. In July an Austrian army emerged from the famous fortified Quadrilateral in Italy, defeated Charles Albert at Custoza and occupied Milan. In October Austrian armies occupied Vienna, installing a new Emperor, Francis Joseph (1848-1916), who was bound by no promises, and a new Chancellor, Schwartzenburg, who was embarrassed by no scruples. In 1849 Schwartzenburg tackled the problem of Hungary, assisted by the Tsar Nicholas, who disapproved of revolutions in other people's territory only less than he disapproved of them in his own.

In the previous November, Frederick William IV. of Prussia had dismissed his liberal ministry, and sent troops to Berlin, who brought the Prussian parliament to a violent and unhonoured end. At Frankfort the German National Parliament was still debating fundamentals with exemplary thoroughness, and in March, 1849, offered the German revolutionary crown to the King of Prussia. He rejected it with contumely, and the Frankfort Parliament faded away into non-existence. Frederick William was wise, if ungracious, in

his refusal, for his acceptance would have involved him in a war with Austria. How wise he had been in 1849 he demonstrated by his follies of 1850. He took up a curious plan which would, in effect, have absorbed a number of the smallest German States into Prussia. The implacable Schwartzenburg ordered him to drop it, and he did so. This Convention of Olmütz was the worst humiliation of Prussia since Jena. The "Bismarck" of 1850 ruled in Vienna, not in Berlin. The Prussian Bismarck of the future was taking note of all these events, and making his own deductions from them.

Convulsive flickers of expiring revolution illumined the Italian sky through most of 1849. Charles Albert invaded Lombardy once again, and his forlorn hope was defeated at Novara in March; he abdicated, and made way for Victor Emmanuel. Stranger things were happening in Rome. Since his accession in 1846, Pope Pius IX. had astonished the world by his liberalism, but he was not liberal enough for 1848, and had fled from the city after the assassination of his minister, Rossi. Mazzini and Garibaldi seized the opening and established a Roman Republic in the tradition of Rienzi. It was doomed to destruction, but as an advertisement of revolutionary heroism it was, perhaps, worth while, and Garibaldi's retreat into the Apennines was not forgotten. His proclamation in the last hours of the Republic has won an immortality almost as secure as Nelson's signal at Trafalgar. "I offer neither pay nor quarters nor provisions; I offer hunger, thirst, forced marches, battles, death. Let him who loves his country in his heart, and not with his lips only, follow me." Six hundred followed him. Their

aim was Venice, which they did not reach. Venice, defended by Manin, capitulated in August.

What survived the revolutions? In Germany a memory of parliamentary futility; in Italy a memory of an heroic king and heroic republicans. Certain institutions also; the Piedmontese Parliament, which survived to be enlarged into the Parliament of all Italy and to be drastically remodelled by Mussolini. Even Prussia secured a parliament of sorts, which endured until the end of the Great War—a curious parliament this “Landtag,” based on a franchise giving double or treble votes to holders of property. Only in Austria did Schwartzenburg put back the clock to before 1848 and even earlier; he sought to extinguish nationality by denying it any organs of expression whatever.

In France the Revolution produced a more conspicuous change; starting from monarchy, it passed through republic to empire. The flight of Louis Philippe created a kind of vacuum, and it was immediately filled by the Parisian socialists, who made arrangements for the election of a democratic National Assembly and established national workshops to provide work and pay for all who wanted it. Pay was provided more easily than work, and the Assembly, by no means socialistic in tone, found itself confronted by 100,000 disorderly dole-supported idlers. Firmly grasping the nettle, the Assembly decreed the closing of the workshops, and appointed General Cavaignac to cope with the inevitable insurrection. The fighting of the “Four June Days” surpassed anything of the kind produced by the Revolution of 1789. France was thus in a nervous and conservative mood

when her people proceeded to the election of the President of their new Republic at the end of the year, and their votes were given in overwhelming majority to Prince Louis Napoleon, newly returned from an exile that had begun with the fall of his uncle. He was scarcely a Frenchman except by aspiration, but his name stood for order at home and glory abroad. As the first Napoleon had saved France from the Jacobins, so the second might save her from the socialists.

Thus France emerged from the storms of 1848 with a republican constitution. It was a singularly bad constitution, and the Assembly that constructed it had also made it wellnigh unalterable under forms of law, forgetting that what will not bend breaks. In 1849 a new Assembly was elected, and it contained a large royalist majority. The France that elected both the President and the new Assembly had been animated by one emotion—dread of a socialist revolution and “reign of terror”; yet one emotion had produced divergent results, mainly, perhaps, because there had been no “Bonapartist” party ready with candidates to contest the elections for the Assembly. Moreover, the constitution resembled that of the United States in one respect, that President and Assembly were independent powers, neither capable of getting rid of the other. Deadlocks have occasionally resulted in America, and such a deadlock, in far more explosive circumstances, now afflicted France. We need not follow the rival moves of President and Assembly through the years 1849-1851. The President started with the greater popularity, and played his cards with the greater skill. The constitution would terminate his tenure of office in 1852, and he failed to induce the

required three-quarters of the Assembly to alter the constitution on this point. Perhaps he would have forced his way to despotism in any case, for he was the nephew of his uncle and was determined to make history repeat itself. Anyhow, cutting knots that could not be untied was part of the Napoleonic tradition. The *coup d'état* of December, 1851, forcibly dissolved the Assembly, muzzled the Press, and established a virtually despotic Presidential system on the lines of the Consulate of 1799. France approved by an overwhelming vote, and a change of names gave her an Emperor Napoleon III. (the first Napoleon's son being Napoleon II.) a year later. Louis Napoleon had assumed the mantle of his uncle, but, to quote the exquisite epigram of the best English writer on his career, it was too large for him. He had challenged comparison with the greatest administrator and soldier of modern times, a gigantic figure already transformed and glorified by the mists of adulatory legend. The mantle would be for ever tripping his steps, and his forward progress a series of stumbles.

## CHAPTER IV

### *NAPOLEON III. AND THE UNION OF ITALY* (1852—1860)

"THE Empire," said Napoleon, "means peace," and certainly the blessings of peace, or some of them, were showered upon the now docile French nation by its

industrious and benevolent despot. Railway construction was actively promoted, and the immense confiscated estates of Louis Philippe's family supplied funds for orphanages, asylums, hospitals. In Paris, slums were cleared and the concentric boulevards mapped out; modern Paris is, in fact, mainly a creation of the Second Empire. As in Mussolini's Italy, material efficiency was to be a compensation for the suppression of liberty. After angling unsuccessfully for a Marie Louise, the parvenu Emperor selected as his bride a Spanish lady, who had all the charms and none of the vices of Josephine. For the first time for a century Frenchmen could interest themselves, if so disposed, in a really brilliant Court.

Yet if the Empire "meant peace," it also, and rather more obviously, meant war. Within seven years the new Napoleon had challenged and defeated both the great hereditary despots of Eastern Europe, Nicholas of Russia in the Crimea and Francis Joseph of Austria in Italy.

The Crimean War lies on the fringe of our subject, and it is impossible here to investigate the prolonged and confused negotiations that preceded it. Suffice it to say—though the fact used to be denied by English historians—that the war was the work of English rather than of French statesmen. The integrity of the Turkish Empire was a British rather than a French interest, as many Frenchmen were not slow to perceive. Napoleon joined in the war, partly because it was at any rate a war and the Empire needed glory, partly because it gave him alliance with the Power whose friendship he most coveted. According to his reading of history, the grand error of "my uncle" had



been his implacable hostility to England; a Napoleon backed by friends across the Channel would dominate European policy. He regarded England and France as the two leaders of civilization, and held that their close friendship and co-operation would be for the good of the whole Continent. It is perhaps a pity that these kindly thoughts were only fitfully reciprocated. We in England could not forget the constitutional indecorum of the *coup d'état*; nor could we forget "my uncle."

The war was unskilfully conducted on the Allied side, but Sevastopol fell at last, and fell before a mainly French assault. Paris, the seat of the Peace Congress, was once again the Mecca of Europe; what a contrast to 1815, when Mecca had been situated in Vienna! Moreover, an English sovereign had made the first state visit to Paris since the far-off day when little Henry VI. was brought over and crowned King of France as a counterblast to Saint Joan's coronation of the Dauphin at Reims. The terms of the treaty were notoriously writ in water so far as the integrity of Turkey and the curtailment of Russia were concerned, but the work of the Congress had other and more admirable features. A Declaration of Paris on maritime law abolished privateering, and laid down regulations of naval warfare on commerce which have stood the test of time, and the International Commission for the control of the Danube not only removed sandbanks and lowered tariffs, but provided a useful precedent of international co-operation.

In the year in which Napoleon assumed his crown (1852) a much abler but hardly a more scrupulous statesman had become Prime Minister of Piedmont

26 A HISTORY OF WESTERN EUROPE  
with the deliberate intention of achieving the union of Italy. The Italian leaders of 1848 had held that Italy could achieve her goal by her own exertions. Cavour was under no such illusions; in his cool judgment, patriotism was not enough. Piedmont must, of course, be made a model State, so that all but the most incorrigible republicans would be reconciled to a Piedmontese dynasty. But Austria could hardly be reconciled to the loss of her provinces, and it took a Great Power to beat a Great Power. In plain words, Napoleon must drive the Austrians out of Italy.

Napoleon was not unwilling, for he very naturally cared more for Italy than any country but France. Moreover, nationalism was part of his philosophy; he had once been a Carbonaro. He had offended Italian nationalism in 1849 by sending troops to suppress the Roman Republic. That illustrated another department of his philosophy, his belief in the Catholic Church as an antidote to socialism. But the Roman Republic had been doomed in any case, and certainly Cavour did not regret its extinction.

Cavour's first notable move was the entry of Piedmont into the Crimean War. It served as a kind of advertisement and secured a discussion of the Italian question on a sort of "private members' day" in the course of the Paris Congress. But perhaps the value of this singular manœuvre has been exaggerated. The Franco-Italian business hardly began to move until an Italian republican fanatic tried to assassinate Napoleon early in 1858. It might seem an unconvincing argument, but modern psychology has taught us that human resolves are seldom grounded in logic. In the summer of the same year, Napoleon, behind the backs

NAPOLEON AND UNION OF ITALY. 27  
of his Ministers, invited Cavour to an interview at Plombières.

Here a strange conspiracy was concocted. If Piedmont could irritate Austria into declaring war on her, France would join Piedmont and secure for her Lombardy and Venice, receiving Savoy and Nice as payment. Napoleon's cousin, Prince Jerome, was to marry the daughter of Victor Emmanuel and, perhaps, rule a province in Central Italy. All Italy was to be federated under the Pope. All this was in the Napoleonic tradition—an Italian campaign, recalling Rivoli and Marengo; a "kingdom of Italy" in the Po Valley; a crown for a subordinate Bonaparte; and a consolation prize for the Pope. Cavour kept his face; he would use Napoleon, and when he had done with him he would fool him in strict accordance with the precepts of Machiavelli.

The drama sketched in 1858 was staged, so far as the first act went, in the spring of 1859. Provocations of word and deed produced the Austrian declaration of war. The French crossed the frontier, won the Battle of Magenta, entered Milan, won the Battle of Solferino. But these were no Rivolis or Marengos, and the Austrian armies withdrew to their Quadrilateral. France did not share her Emperor's enthusiasm for the Italian cause; Napoleon discovered that a soldier's career cannot be profitably begun at the age of fifty; and Prussia threatened on the Rhine frontier. The French Emperor secretly arranged a meeting with Francis Joseph and made peace at Villafranca, securing for his ally Lombardy but not Venice.

Cavour was mad with rage, and for a time resigned his Prime Ministership, but, in fact, the situation was

28 . A HISTORY OF WESTERN EUROPE  
not as black as it appeared. Napoleon had set the ball rolling, and it continued to roll. In the small States to the South of Lombardy—Tuscany, Parma, Modena—and in the northern provinces of the Papal States, revolutions had already broken out, and the peoples had clearly indicated their desire to be subjects of Victor Emmanuel. If France and Austria could be immobilized, there might yet be a real kingdom of Italy. Venice must be left alone, for to touch it would mean renewed war with Austria; Rome also, for an attack upon the Sacred City would start incalculable reactions throughout Catholic Europe. Napoleon would leave well—or ill—alone, if he held Savoy and Nice. The principle of nationalism was invoked, and plebiscites voted Nice and Savoy to France, and Tuscany and its neighbours to the kingdom of Victor Emmanuel.

There remained the kingdom of Naples and Sicily, where revolutions had been frequent and always unsuccessful. Here some stiffening of the nationalistic impulse was needed; it was the ideal opening for Garibaldi, once the hero of the Roman Republic and the disciple of Mazzini, now a knight-errant in the service of Victor Emmanuel. Garibaldi was let loose, with his Thousand Redshirts, upon Sicily much as Sir Francis Drake had once been let loose upon the Spanish Main. It was all quite unofficial and could, in case of failure, be disavowed by King and Prime Minister. What followed was the most romantic and amusing episode in the wars of nineteenth-century Europe. "The Thousand" landed in the extreme west of Sicily on May 11, 1860. There were 80,000 Neapolitan troops in Sicily; yet in fifteen days Gari-

baldi had occupied Palermo. In August he crossed the straits to Italy, being publicly forbidden and secretly encouraged to do so by his royal master. On September 6 he was in Naples, panting to advance upon Rome and take his particular enemy, the Pope, by the beard. It was time for the official army of Piedmont to intervene and to prevent enough becoming too much. The Piedmontese army crossed the Papal States, with apologies to their owner, whose troops they none the less reluctantly met and defeated. Garibaldi met his royal master on the Volturno, where the Neapolitans were making a stand at last. The great adventurer laid down his command. The kingdom of Naples ceased to exist. All Italy except the province of Venetia and the "Patrimony of St. Peter" was now one kingdom, and it was sufficient. The cause of Italian nationality had progressed so far that its completion was inevitable. The next great European storms would shake down these golden apples into the Italian basket; and Bismarck would do the shaking.

The official heroes of Italian unity are Mazzini, Garibaldi, Cavour, Victor Emmanuel. Napoleon III. is seldom mentioned in that context, south of the Alps. Italy had wished to achieve her own salvation, and still wished to pretend that she had done so. Without Napoleon there would certainly have been no Italian unity in 1860; yet the conquest of Lombardy was forgotten, and the failure to conquer Venice alone remembered. And if Napoleon's exploit had little thanks from Italy, it had less from France. The French have always been somewhat exclusively patriotic in their political philosophy, and schemes for

30 A HISTORY OF WESTERN EUROPE  
the so-called welfare of Europe leave them cold. The acquisition of Nice and Savoy was something, but against it had to be set the creation of a new Great Power upon a French frontier.

## CHAPTER V

### *THE MAKING OF THE GERMAN EMPIRE*

(1861—1871)

A YEAR after Victor Emmanuel assumed the title of King of Italy, William I. ascended the throne of Prussia, and a series of events began which led straight up to the establishment of the German Empire—the central great event of our period. The union of Italy had added what may without offence be called a junior member of the society of Great Powers. The union of Germany (to use an inaccurate phrase) did not add to the list of Great Powers, for Prussia was already numbered among them; but it transformed a junior member into the President of the Society. From 1815 onwards for many years the Presidency had belonged to Austria; during the fifties it belonged to Napoleonic France; after 1870 it belonged to Germany, and the overbearing conduct of that “President” led, in 1914, to the temporary disintegration of that Society in the Great War.

King William was an old soldier. In his youth he

had fought in the last campaign against the first Napoleon, and the ambition of his life was to restore the efficiency of the Prussian army, to make it what it had been in the days of Frederick the Great, the best army in Europe. In doing this he had no definite policy of aggression in his mind; he was a soldier, not a statesman, and military efficiency was dear to him for its own sake. Roon, his Minister of War, introduced a scheme of army reform, but its financial clauses were rejected by the Lower, or elected, House of the Prussian Parliament. Here was a situation requiring a strong and a cunning hand, and King William sent for Count Otto von Bismarck, and made him his Prime Minister.

Bismarck belonged to the old aristocracy of Prussian Junkers, or landowning squires, and he was by temperament and tradition an intense conservative. "The Revolution" was a term often on his lips, and it summarized for him everything he most hated and despised—liberty, equality, fraternity, democracy, parliamentarism, nationalism. He was a Prussian, not a German; he believed in the divine right of kings and the rule of the Junker aristocracy as landlords and as military officers. Such was Bismarck in 1862, and such, in a sense, he always remained. But he was—need it be said?—an extremely intelligent man. He was no "Die-hard," no leader of lost causes, ready to expire picturesquely in the last ditch, the futile champion of the irretrievably old against the irresistibly new. He had a fairly thorough understanding of the modern world which in many ways he so much disliked. He would use the forces of "the Revolution" to complete the work of a long line of Hohenzollern militarists.

Bismarck's first task was rather like that which so often confronted our English Charles I.; he had to raise the new taxes for the army in defiance of the parliament. The Prussian "constitution," an aftermath of 1848, was a guileless document and no match for the new Prime Minister; the taxes were raised, and with apparent legality. Anyhow, there were no Hampdens in Prussia to object.

In 1863 there was an insurrection in Russian Poland, and, as the Tsar Alexander II. was a "liberal" who had just emancipated 25,000,000 Russian serfs, there was no knowing what he might do. The German nationalists sympathized with the Poles, for nationalism in those days was still an altruistic creed, touched with the idealism of Mazzini. A nationalist sympathized with other nationalisms besides his own, even with the nationalism of his next-door neighbour. To Bismarck, on the other hand, the only relevant consideration was the fact that there was a Polish province in Prussia stretching to within a hundred miles of Berlin; if Alexander granted "home rule" to the Russian Poles, the Prussian Poles would be fatally excited. So King William wrote a personal letter to the Tsar, and the Poles were once more suppressed.

At the end of the same year the King of Denmark died without an heir by direct descent, and this opened up a long-foreseen and appallingly complicated problem, the problem of Schleswig and Holstein. To describe this problem in detail would occupy a whole volume—not a popular volume—of this Sixpenny Library. Briefly, the points to be observed are three. First, the duchies had for hundreds of years been an appanage of the Danish Crown,



MAKING OF THE GERMAN EMPIRE. 33  
though not part of the kingdom of Denmark, but their succession, unlike that of Denmark, was ruled by the so-called Salic Law, which excluded the new King of Denmark. Secondly, the population was mainly German, and desired independence of Denmark; it desired, in fact, to become a German State under a duke of its own. Thirdly, Bismarck was determined to secure the annexation of the duchies to Prussia (they included the peninsula across which the Kiel Canal was to be dug); he was also perfectly ready to make their annexation the pretext for a war with Austria. For centuries Austria had been, in legal right and in actual fact, the leading Power among the German States. If Prussia was to master Germany, Austria must first be excluded from it. Afterwards, no doubt, but only afterwards, one might conciliate and secure the alliance of a de-Germanized Austria.

What was done in the next three years (1864-1866) was the real masterpiece of Bismarckian armed diplomacy; all that followed those three years, even the Franco-German War, was consequential and comparatively simple. The first step was to persuade Austria to join with Prussia in wresting the duchies from Denmark. Austria was persuaded, for there was little doubt that if she did not act, either Prussia or the German revolutionary nationalists, or both, would act without her. So there followed the Danish War of 1864, and the duchies were ceded jointly to Austria and Prussia. It was now necessary to quarrel with Austria over the question what was to be done with them, but first of all the ground must be tested and prepared. What of Europe? Russia, since the Polish business, was a friend; England would not intervene;

34 .A HISTORY OF WESTERN EUROPE  
the active support of Italy could be bought by the promise of Venice, where Austrian rule was still desperately entrenched.

There remained Napoleon. He had fallen on evil days since his Italian venture. It was his nature to visualize, somewhat vaguely, no doubt, the welfare of the world in general, whereas his subjects were exclusively concerned with the welfare of France. From Italy his eyes had turned to Mexico, the Monroe Doctrine being in virtual abeyance during the course of the American Civil War. A "Latin Empire" with a Hapsburg sovereign was launched under Napoleonic auspices; there should be a Panama Canal to balance the Suez Canal, already in course of construction by a French company on the other side of the world. The Mexican project was nearing its tragic conclusion when Bismarck interviewed Napoleon at Biarritz. Napoleon was, in general, quite friendly to the Prussian scheme; he believed in large national units, for Germany as for Italy. France, of course, ought to receive some kind of compensation; his subjects would insist upon it. Unfortunately, Bismarck, unlike Cavour, did not need the assistance of French armies, and was therefore less disposed to pay. Also Germany had no Savoy or Nice to offer, no territories whose French population would justify their surrender on nationalistic grounds. So the talk about compensations was apparently confined to generalities. Napoleon, however, was content; he assumed that the Austro-Prussian war would prove exhausting and indecisive. He would in due course intervene as President of Europe, impose a settlement, and exact a fee for his services.

In following Bismarck in his survey of Europe, we must not overlook the minor States of Germany. These were entirely opposed to the Prussian annexation of the duchies, and Bismarck was very well content that they should be. Let them join Austria. Their military effort would be negligible and their belligerency would enlarge the scope of the subsequent settlement.

By the summer of 1866 all was ready for the war of Prussia and Italy *versus* Austria and the rest of the German States. It is called the Six Weeks' War, and, in fact, it was rather shorter. Bismarck had not overrated the deadly precision of the new Prussian army, organized by Roon and commanded by Moltke. The Austrians were crushingly defeated at Sadowa, and Bismarck persuaded his King and his soldiers, much against their inclination, to offer an immediate and, for Austria, a generous peace. By the Treaty of Prague, Austria surrendered Venice, but otherwise lost not an inch of territory; but the old German Confederation, that masterpiece of Metternich, was dissolved. In its place appeared a new North German Confederation, from which Austria and the three south-western States, Bavaria, Wurtemberg, and Baden, were excluded.

The North German Confederation represented as much of Germany as Prussia could, for the moment, comfortably digest. Even before the war three-quarters of this territory had belonged to the kingdom of Prussia. Certain important States, among them Hanover, were now annexed outright, as was also Schleswig-Holstein, and this made Prussian territory seven-eighths of the whole. The remaining eighth—Saxony,

Mecklenburgh, and others—were members of the Confederation. And now Bismarck fulfilled a surprising promise he had made before the war. The Confederation was to have a parliament elected by universal suffrage. True, its powers were limited, but the democratic gesture converted many who were already half-converted by "blood and iron." The Junkers were annoyed, but Bismarck had grasped the political truth that there is no harm in annoying those of your followers whom self-preservation compels to follow you. The liberal opposition that had opposed the army taxes was dissolved; most of the Liberals henceforth called themselves National Liberals, which was a way of saying Bismarckians.

Napoleon was completely nonplussed. He asked for the Palatinate, which belonged to Bavaria; Bismarck published the demand, and at once the three southwestern States made close alliances with Prussia. He tried to secure Luxembourg by purchase from Holland, and a disapproving Europe converted it into neutral territory. He proposed a partition of Belgium, and Bismarck pocketed the proposal, for publication on the eve of the Franco-German War.

Before we proceed we must note a by-product of the Bismarckian triumph which ultimately had important consequences. The Magyars of Hungary had been crushed by force in 1849. Now they secured their revenge as completely as if, like the Italians, they had joined Prussia in 1866. By a treaty of 1867 Austria became Austria-Hungary, a "Dual Monarchy." Henceforth Austria and Hungary were equal partners, sharing a Sovereign, a Chancellor, a foreign policy, and an army, but each controlling its own internal

MAKING OF THE GERMAN EMPIRE . 37  
affairs. Within Austria the rule of the Hapsburg monarchy of the subject races was increasingly mild and benevolent; within Hungary the rule of the Magyar aristocracy was an unabashed racial tyranny. Europe was to learn from the example of Hungary that nationalism was not as simple a solution as it appeared in the gospel of Mazzini; that nationalism unalloyed is a solution only when the nation lives apart in a territory definable by agreement. The Hungary of the Magyars included several millions of Serbs and Roumanians.

After the events of 1866 a Franco-Prussian war was inevitable. Both parties wanted it: Bismarck because a national war against the traditional enemy, a war in which North and South Germans fought shoulder to shoulder, would complete the Prussianization of Germany; France because national pride had been wounded and could only be avenged in blood. For centuries the security of France had been based on the divisions of Germany; a Germany united and yet a good neighbour was a thing outside the limits of French political imagination. Napoleon was sinking towards the grave; he was the victim rather than the author of what followed.

A pretext for the war was found in the affairs of Spain. That country had recently expelled its Queen Isabella, and offered its crown, possibly at Bismarck's instigation, to a certain Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern, whose brother had recently been appointed King of the new kingdom of Roumania. Needless to say, he was a relation of the King of Prussia. France protested, and Leopold withdrew his acceptance. France protested again, demanding that the candida-

ture should not be renewed. The demand was insulting, and was refused; Bismarck's publication of the demand and refusal was a counter-insult, and both nations rushed to war in July, 1870. Before the end of August one of the French armies had been shut up in Metz; on September 1 the other, with the Emperor in person, was compelled to capitulate at Sedan. France, henceforth a republic, made a gallant effort to continue the struggle, but the end was never in doubt. Paris was besieged, and surrendered in January, 1871. Peace followed, the Treaty of Frankfort, and France had to surrender Alsace and Lorraine.

Alsace and Lorraine had been debatable ground between France and Germany ever since the Empire of Charlemagne was divided between his grandsons a thousand years before; in fact, the very name of Lorraine (Lothringen) is a memorial of the eldest grandson, Lothar, whose territory was divided between his brothers, Charles of France and Louis of Germany, in 870. The provinces had come to France piecemeal under Henry II., Louis XIV., and Louis XV. A considerable part of their population was German by blood and by speech, but there is no doubt that, had a vote been taken, a large majority would have voted against severance from France; the transfer was therefore an offence against the principle of nationalism. The German Government hoped that closer acquaintance would reconcile the population to its new rulers. It did not do so, and the Alsatians, like the Poles, became prisoners of the German Empire. The annexation turned out, in fact, to be Bismarck's most serious mistake, and he admitted as much in old age when he declared that he had intended to annex Alsace only

MAKING OF THE GERMAN EMPIRE' 39  
and not Lorraine, but was overruled by the soldiers. It may have been so; one never knows with Bismarck's uncorroborated statements. If it was so, the fact provides a startling commentary on Prussian government, and throws light on much that followed. If Bismarck, a political superman if ever there was one, could not keep the General Staff out of politics, how could his successors expect to do so?

The war of 1866 had given Venice to Italy, in spite of the fact that the Italian forces had suffered two defeats; the war of 1870 gave her Rome with hardly any fighting at all, for the French troops, which had supported the temporal power of the Pope since the siege of Rome in 1849, were withdrawn to defend France. Thus the Italian kingdom was completed, except for certain territories on the Adriatic (Trieste and Fiume) and in the Alps (the Trentino), for which Italy had to wait until after the Great War. The attainment of the ideal, as so often happens, brought with it many disillusionments. Cavour had died only a year after his great triumph, an irreplaceable loss, for he was as well fitted to rule a nation as to make one. Unlike Bismarck, he was a convinced parliamentarian, and he might have succeeded in teaching his countrymen how to make the best use of parliamentary institutions. His successors certainly failed to do. Italian parliamentary government neither inspired nor deserved respect, and after sixty years of unhonoured existence it was swept away by Mussolini.

The Pope posed before Europe as the hero of a tragedy, but the loss of temporal power was more than compensated in spiritual prestige. Earlier in the same year the Vatican Council had accented the mysterious

40 A HISTORY OF WESTERN EUROPE  
doctrine of Papal Infallibility. As ruler of the Papal States, the Pope had been one among many petty princes; as "the prisoner of the Vatican" he stood alone, as one whose power was not of this world.

## CHAPTER VI

### *BISMARCKIAN EUROPE: THE ISOLATION OF FRANCE*

(1871—1890)

AFTER the Franco-Prussian War we enter upon another long period of peace in Western Europe, comparable with that which had begun with the fall of Napoleon and ended in the storms of 1848, and longer than it by ten years. In a real sense the period is a unity, the Epoch of the German Empire, yet forty-three years is rather much to comprehend in a single view, and the best time of division is found in 1890, when the young William II. dispensed with the services of Bismarck. Until 1890, the unfailing resourcefulness of Bismarck maintained and consolidated the European situation as established in 1871. The German Empire dominated Europe: Russia, Austria, and Italy became, on different terms, her allies; England was, except for a brief Disraelian interval, uninterested in Europe; France was isolated and forlorn. In 1890 "the Pilot" was dropped, and the tiller grasped by reckless and unsteady hands. At once a regrouping of the Powers



began. Russia fell away from Germany and allied herself with France. The Italian alliance with Germany and Austria was so qualified by conditions that it became a meaningless formality. England became alarmed, and entered into friendly understandings with France and Russia. The stage was ready for the Great War.

After the Franco-Prussian War, there was a new Germany and a new France: Germany an empire, and France a republic. The German Empire was proclaimed with a flourish of trumpets in the royal palace of the old French Kings; its very existence was a trophy of victory. The French Republic was cradled in defeat. Not till 1875 was its constitution enacted by a narrow majority in an Assembly where more than half were monarchists at heart, but hopelessly distracted between the claims of Bourbon and Orleans—Bourbon meaning divine right, and Orleans a parliamentary system on the English model.

The new German Empire was merely the North German Confederation, enlarged by the entry of Bavaria, Wurtemberg, and Baden, and gilded with new titles. The King of Prussia did not cease to be King of Prussia, but he also became German Emperor. The Prussian Prime Minister did not cease to be Prime Minister of Prussia, but he also became Imperial Chancellor. The Empire was a Federal State in which nearly all the States themselves were hereditary monarchies, and one of them, Prussia, about twice as large as all the others taken together. Its deliberative organs were the Reichstag, elected by manhood suffrage, and the Bundesrat, where sat in secret conclave the representatives of the Princes of the several

States. Here the Imperial Chancellor (who was also Prime Minister of Prussia) presided, and votes were weighed as well as counted, for where the States differed so greatly in size, an equality of votes would clearly have been an absurdity. The Prussian vote alone was sufficient to block any change in the Constitution, and the Constitution included a surprising number of important matters. The Reichstag was empowered to amend or veto only such legislation as the Bundesrat prepared for it, and its control over taxation was limited to a right to refuse assent to new taxes.

Everything depended upon the partnership of Emperor and Chancellor. The Chancellor was the sole responsible Minister, all other Ministers being his assistants and nothing more; there was no Cabinet. The Emperor commanded the army, declared peace and war, made treaties and appointed officials, and all his acts required the signature of the Chancellor. Such a system might suit the circumstances of the moment—a Chancellor of immense ability and prestige backed by an aged Emperor who reposed complete confidence in his judgment. How would it work when William I. and Bismarck were gone?

The Third Republic of France, unlike the German Empire, is still with us, and we may describe it in the present tense. The Legislature consists of a Senate and a Chamber of Deputies; the former chosen by various democratically elected local bodies, and the latter by direct democratic election. The President is elected, not by the people as in America, but by the Legislature, for it was feared that a President independently elected might be tempted to follow the Bonapartist

tradition. The ministry is responsible to the Legislature, and such Presidents as have attempted to interfere with ministerial politics have generally been compelled to resign their office before the end of their seven years' term. On paper there seems to be a Cabinet system of the English type, but parties are numerous, and every government is a somewhat brittle coalition. The legislative Chambers are but little amenable to governmental discipline (which may or may not be a good thing), and the power of dissolution before the allotted term—nine years for the Senate and four for the Chamber of Deputies—is never used. Thus governments are apt to be brief, occasionally bewilderingly brief; M. Briand appears to have been nine times Prime Minister. The Republican constitution has still active enemies, and its friends seem numerous rather than enthusiastic, but it has lasted much longer than any other political experiment in France since the first Revolution, and its prospects are as good to-day as they ever have been, perhaps better.

The chief international event of the seventies was a prolonged crisis in the Balkans. It involved war between Russia and Turkey, and nearly involved war between Russia and England. It was the occasion of the latest and bitterest episodes in the long war of words between Gladstone and Disraeli, when Gladstone demanded the expulsion of the Turks, "bag and baggage," from the Christian provinces, and Disraeli described Gladstone as "a sophistical rhetorician inebriated by the exuberance of his own verbosity." Settlement was made at the Congress of Berlin, the last formal gathering of the principal statesmen of

Europe before the Great War, when the political frontiers were given to the Balkan States which lasted until the next great upheaval in 1912. From the standpoint of the technique of international discussion, the Berlin Congress has a special interest, for its success was due to the fact that most of its important conclusions had been settled in advance by secret "conversations."

But the fundamental importance of the Balkan crisis of the seventies lies in its revelation of the fact that nationalism, having achieved its end in Italy and Germany, was spreading eastwards. The more civilized Slavic peoples of Austria had invented Pan-Slavism. At present the power of the Dual Monarchy barred their way, but their ideal was visibly disintegrating European Turkey. Russia posed as the patron of all Slavic peoples, and Austria was necessarily their enemy. Russia bought off the hostility of Austria in 1877 by promising her a protectorate over the Serb population inhabiting the Turkish provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Bismarck saw to it that the promise was kept in 1878. Thus the Serb population under Hapsburg rule was increased, and the rulers of independent Serbia had a new grievance against Austria. It was in the capital of Bosnia that Serb fanatics murdered an Austrian archduke in June, 1914. The Treaty of Berlin was immediately followed by the Dual Alliance between Germany and Austria. Each Power undertook to support the other if either was attacked by Russia; but a Russian attack would not come in Bismarck's time.

From 1815 to 1880 the history of Western Europe had been curiously self-contained, very unlike the

history of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when France and England, Holland, Spain, and Portugal had fought one another for colonial empire. In fact, England had won the race so decisively that the Continental Powers had lost interest in the other continents. Russia, it is true, was spreading across Asia, and a series of alarms on the Afghan frontier had made England and Russia traditional enemies and England the constant backer of the Turk. France had begun her African empire in Algiers as early as 1830, but for a long time no European rival regarded her undertakings with jealous interest. Now all that was to be changed. The ever-increasing development of industry, outrunning the demand of home markets, sought surplus markets in undeveloped countries; capital undertook to develop these countries, and the export of capital created a new imperialism, in which France, Italy, and Germany soon became as actively interested as Russia and England. All the Great Powers except Austria-Hungary became imperialist; the Dual Monarchy had sufficient food for thought at home.

The clearest, and in some respects the most important, case was Egypt, which had been a special interest of France ever since the romantic expedition of Napoleon. In the sixties and seventies the Khedive Ismail borrowed abundantly in England and France and then went bankrupt. The bond-holders appealed to their governments, and the governments established a Dual Control in 1879. Arabi Pasha led what was, in part, at least, a nationalist rebellion in 1881, and England and France had either to withdraw or go much further. France withdrew, nervous of large

46 A HISTORY OF WESTERN EUROPE  
commitments with Germany on her frontiers, and England went ahead. Egypt became in all but name a province of the British Empire and Lord Cromer began his great proconsular career. Bismarck was very well satisfied; England in Egypt would be for years to come an obstacle to friendship between England and France.

But France, with Bismarck's express encouragement, found a consolation prize in Tunis, a province much coveted by Italy. As a result, Italy, finding herself powerless in isolation, was driven into her unnatural alliance with Germany and Austria. In the nineties she sought empire in Abyssinia, but not successfully.

Bismarck was an old-fashioned statesman who did not believe in colonies. He foresaw that a German overseas empire would involve a German big navy, and that a challenge to British naval supremacy would draw England out of her isolation and make her what she had been three times before, the backer of an organized European opposition. He was, in fact, a European, not a "world" statesman; he saw that a German "world policy" would shake the foundations of the European supremacy he had given his country; he foresaw, in fact, the situation that produced the Great War. None the less, the German colonial party were not to be denied, and Bismarck set himself to satisfy the ambitions of the rising generation. Almost all Africa was partitioned in the eighties, and Germany secured four provinces. During these same years Gordon died at Khartoum and Cecil Rhodes made his first journey through what was to be Rhodesia.

At home, Bismarck's rule had been no easy one. The

seventies were filled with a long conflict with the Catholic Church, mostly about education in the schools, and the eighties were filled with conflicts with the Social Democrats. Bismarck had expected that, by making the Reichstag democratic, he would undercut the bourgeois liberalism that had hankered after an English parliamentary system. He was right, but he had not reckoned on industrial socialism, which Marx and Lassalle had transplanted from France to Germany. To both Catholics and Socialists Bismarck had to make many concessions.

At last, in 1888, the old Emperor died; his son was already a dying man, and before the year was out the third and last German Emperor ascended the throne. It was inevitable that this young man, bursting with energy and self-confidence, should seek new and less formidable counsel. The Pilot was dropped. Eight years of grumbling remained to him. "Our task," he said, "can only be completed when Germany has a powerful parliament." He seems to have realized the drawback inherent in establishing a despotism—namely, the *next despot!*

## CHAPTER VII

*THE GROUPING OF THE POWERS*

(1890—1907)

WHEN Bismarck fell from power in 1890, the three central Powers, Germany, Austria, and Italy, were bound together by a Triple Alliance, but the three outlying Powers, England, France, and Russia, stood each alone. England and France had not made up their quarrel over Egypt; England and Russia had long been rivals for influence in Turkey, Persia, and Afghanistan, and France, a democratic republic, had little sympathy with the semi-Oriental despotism of Russia. Yet common needs and common dangers were now to compel these three Powers to draw together.

The first step was the Dual Alliance of France and Russia, a natural consequence of the immense military power of Germany, placed between them and ready to strike at either. The Alliance was signed in 1893, and thenceforth French capital was extensively invested in Russian loans. But Russia, crude, unwieldy, and inefficient, liable to plunge into remote entanglements in Turkey, Afghanistan, and China, was an ally of uncertain value. Would not the statesmen of the Third Republic return to the policy of the Second Empire and seek, perhaps with happier results, the friendship of England?

In England the events of the later nineties brought home to us with uncomfortable reiteration the draw-



THE GROUPING OF THE POWERS 49  
backs of our policy of "splendid isolation." The idea of that policy had been that we stood outside Europe, sufficiently occupied in bearing "the white men's burden" in Asia and Africa and breeding daughter-nations in America and Australia. It was a kind of British version of the Monroe Doctrine. Yet a Monroe Doctrine needs an Atlantic if it is to carry conviction: the Straits of Dover do not suffice. Moreover, the United States ostentatiously disclaimed empire: we were imperialists, and the new imperialisms of France and Germany collided with ours in every part of the world. In 1894 there was friction with France over Siam; in 1896 the German Emperor, with an eye to the ultimate Germanizing of the Transvaal, congratulated Kruger on the defeat of the Jameson Raid. In 1898 Kitchener's advance up the Nile collided with a French exploring party from the Congo at Fashoda. In 1899 every government and every press in Europe expressed sympathy with our enemies in the South African War. France and Russia tried to persuade Germany to organize a joint intervention of the Powers. Germany refused: but she had already announced her policy of creating a great fleet.

In fact, we needed a friend in Europe. The obvious friend seemed to be Germany, and Joseph Chamberlain, the most enterprising British statesman at the turn of the century, did his best to secure some form of alliance with her. In Bismarck's day it had been Germany who sought alliance with England, which we had refused because we preferred isolation. Now, the positions were reversed, and Chamberlain's overtures, hearty rather than discreet, were publicly snubbed in Berlin; an English alliance was incon-

50 A HISTORY OF WESTERN EUROPE  
sistent with the dreams of "World Empire," which the young emperor had been sedulously propagating.

The German refusal was the French opportunity, and it was seized by that important statesman, Delcassé, and Paul Cambon, his ambassador in London. On the English side the principal authors of the new policy were Mr. Balfour and Lord Lansdowne. Nor must we overlook the part played by King Edward VII. German writers so greatly exaggerated the rôle of King Edward that we in England have since tended, perhaps, to underrate it, but no one who reads the account of the King's visit to Paris in 1903, as related in the official biography by Sir Sidney Lee, is likely to mistake its significance. The governments of democratic countries cannot run counter to the instincts and prejudices of their peoples, and that magical visit, which began amid cries of "Vivent les Boers!" and ended with cries of "Vive notre roi!" oiled the wheels of the machinery which professional diplomatists were setting in motion.

The Anglo-French treaty of 1904 was not an alliance, for it bound neither party to any course of future action. It was a settlement of old quarrels in Newfoundland, Madagascar, Siam, West Africa, and, most of all, in Egypt; England was to have a free hand in Egypt on condition that England would support France in Morocco.

In Morocco, if anywhere, was the Achilles' heel of the Entente, and German statesmen made straight for it. The Emperor was sent to Tangier, where he made a speech proclaiming his recognition of the "absolute freedom" of the Sultan, and Bülow, who now sat in the seat of Bismarck, demanded a European Con-

ference on the Morocco question. Delcassé wanted to refuse, but was compelled by his colleagues to resign. The Conference met at Algeçiras in 1906, and the French contentions were supported not only by Russia, Great Britain, Spain, and the United States (then active as a "World Power" under Roosevelt), but also by Germany's nominal ally, Italy. Germany had to give way. Though a Liberal Government with an ardently pacific Prime Minister had assumed office in England, the Entente was stronger than before, and the "military conversations," with a view to joint action in a possible future war, had begun. The *Dreadnought* was launched, and Haldane was about to reorganize the British Army.

Between the signing of the Entente Treaty and the Conference of Algeçiras Russian aggression in Manchuria had involved war with Japan and humiliating defeat. The "first revolution" had broken out, and the parliamentary Douma had been established. In these circumstances Russia was very ready to find a new friend, and the Anglo-Russian Treaty of 1907 followed the same lines as the treaty with France; a settlement was found, on paper, for the rivalries of Great Britain and Russia in the then apparently moribund kingdom of Persia. An attempt was even made to invent a "friendship" between the English and Russian peoples, and the great Russian writers, particularly Dostoevsky and Tchekhov, began to excite the admiration of connoisseurs; but the gulf was perhaps too wide to be bridged.

Thus, Europe was divided into two camps, an arrangement which had the most obvious disadvantages. When, after the fall of Napoleon, the

52. A HISTORY OF WESTERN EUROPE

statesmen of the Allies established their Congressional system, the idea in the mind of one of them at least, Castlereagh, had been that European problems should be settled on their merits by a high impartial tribunal. The ideal had never been realized, but so long as the various Powers retained a certain independence of one another, it was possible to hope that there would be, in any dispute, a sufficient jury of neutrals. Thus, Bismarck, in the Anglo-Russian controversies of 1878, had described his part at the Congress of Berlin as that of an "honest broker." After 1907 there could be no "honest brokers." Sir Edward Grey, who was our Foreign Secretary from 1905 to the middle of the Great War, did his best to combine impartiality towards all with loyalty to his "friends," but the result was that Germany and Austria derided his impartiality, and France and Russia occasionally suspected his loyalty.

## CHAPTER VIII

### *THE EVE OF THE GREAT WAR*

(1907—1914)

BEFORE we allow ourselves to drift into the final crisis preceding the catastrophe, it may be well to take a glance at each of the six great actors in the drama that was coming. We say "six," and not "three," for at this point in the narrative the distinction between

"Western Europe" and "Europe," never very easy to maintain, becomes untenable.

The German Empire contained in 1905 a population of sixty millions, and it was rapidly increasing, though not so rapidly as German wealth. Population had increased fifty per cent. since 1870, but output of coal, which is a fairly good measure of prosperity, had been multiplied by five. German policy dominated Austria, and dominated Turkey, where her ambassador enjoyed the prestige that had once belonged to his British colleague—naturally enough, since Germany alone of the Powers made no protest against the Armenian massacres. A German company was engaged in building the Baghdad railway, which would ultimately connect the Bosphorus with the Persian Gulf. The Germany army, ever since 1870, had set the pace of conscription for Europe, and the German navy was now driving Great Britain into furious competition to retain her lead as mistress of the seas. The swashbuckling Emperor loved, like so many despots, to "play at soldiers" even if he had no very definite intention of using them in earnest, and the General Staff was a greater power in politics than the civilian Ministers.

In State schools and universities the Germans were taught from their youth upwards to attribute the whole of the prosperity they enjoyed to the rule of the Prussian dynasty and the prowess of the Prussian army, but it would be wrong to suppose that all Germans were satisfied with the system. Bismarck had assumed that the electors of the Reichstag, dazzled by military victory and rendered docile by education, would accept whatever the military class

54 A HISTORY OF WESTERN EUROPE  
chose to give them; but he was mistaken. He had established an anachronism. The tendencies of the age were all towards self-government, and the Germans were not unaffected. The strength of the Social Democratic Party continued to increase, and in 1912 it secured one-third of the voters. In fact, the prestige of Hohenzollern divine right was inevitably declining, and how could it be maintained? Only if the people were convinced that Germany, without Hohenzollern militarism, would fall a prey to her neighbours. Thus, an atmosphere of international unrest, of recurring crises, and rumours of wars was absolutely necessary, not to Germany, but to the maintenance of the Hohenzollern system. The militarists could be secure only so long as Germany was insecure. They, therefore, cultivated insecurity.

If insecurity was needed, Austria-Hungary furnished the commodity in abundance, for here was an anachronism far less tenable than Bismarck's. Among the forty-nine millions of the 1910 population were eleven million Germans, nine million Magyars, eight million Czechs and Slovaks, eight million Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (Jugoslavs), four million Poles, three million Ruthenes (White Russians), three million Roumanians, one million Italians. The acutest problem was that of the Southern Slavs, or Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes—let us, for short, say "Serbs." There were two million in Austria, comparatively well treated; two million in Bosnia, formally annexed in 1908 in defiance of the terms of the Treaty of Berlin and the protests of Russia and England; and four million groaning under the racial tyranny of the Magyars in Hungary. Outside the Dual Monarchy were three million more Serbs

in the somewhat barbarous little kingdom of Serbia, which had heroically struggled into existence at the expense of Turkey at about the time of the Battle of Waterloo. Things could not go on as they were. The rulers of Serbia aspired to follow the example of Italy, to expel Austro-Hungarian rule from Serb lands and create a great Jugoslavic kingdom. An alternative policy, which found its supporters in Vienna, was to treat the Serbs as the Magyars had been treated in 1867; to make the Dual Monarchy "Triple," and create a Serbian home-ruling province under the Habsburg Crown. This policy would take a great slice out of Hungary, and was bitterly resented by the Magyars: its supporters also intended to destroy and absorb independent Serbia, and consequently it was bitterly resented in Belgrade. The figure-head of the "Triple Monarchy" party was the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, heir to the Austrian throne. It seems probable that his party had already resolved on war with Serbia before his assassination provided them with a pretext. Such a war would no doubt involve war with Russia, but Germany would see to that. Germany gave Austria a free hand against Serbia because the conquest of Serbia would abolish the one obstruction between Austria and Turkey, and give Germany continuous control "from Berlin to Baghdad."

. Italy had drifted away from her nominal allies, and was, in fact, the one Power in 1914 who could choose her policy unfettered by contractual or moral obligations, for she was not obliged by the terms of her alliance to support Germany in a war against France. Her contribution to the catastrophe was her attack

56 A HISTORY OF WESTERN EUROPE  
upon the Turkish province of Tripoli in 1911. Turkey's embroilment with Italy nerved the Balkan States to their united assault upon Turkey in the following year, and the Balkan Wars, by magnifying Serbia, precipitated the Austro-Serbian crisis.

The power of Russia had been overrated ever since Napoleon's disaster in 1812. Russia is hard, perhaps impossible, to conquer, but she is by no means formidable in offence. A nation with rudimentary industries could not munition her armies, and a nation with a rudimentary educational system could not supply the hosts of intelligent subalterns and non-commissioned officers on which the efficiency in action of a modern army is based. In Russia everything had always depended on the character of the Tsar, and it appears that, even when all allowances are made for his difficulties, Nicholas II. was deplorably weak and foolish. None the less, an ambitious scheme of Russian army reform was in progress, and it was calculated that the Russian army would attain its maximum efficiency in 1917. This was, for the German and Austrian Governments, an important factor in the situation. The German army was, of course, ready: the Austrian army was as ready as it ever could be. Every year's postponement of the "inevitable" war placed additional cards in Russia's hands.

France had, in 1906, a population of thirty-nine millions, and, unlike that of all the other Great Powers, it was practically stationary, an ominous fact for French statesmen when one remembers that, in completely militarized States, the size of the army is strictly proportionate to the population. Hence the great interest taken by Frenchmen in the extension of



their African Empire, for North African peoples made excellent troops under French officers. French imperialism had, indeed, been active in the last years of the nineteenth century. Between the date of the annexation of Tunis in 1881 and the date of the Entente, France had acquired provinces in the Soudan and Senegal, the Congo Basin, Dahomey, Tonkin, and Madagascar, and had made her beginnings in Morocco. General Joffre owed his fame to a spectacular march to Timbuctoo. Internally, French politics had not been a subject for much congratulation. One President resigned on account of the financial scandals of his son-in-law, several politicians of importance were convicted of accepting bribes from the French company which made an unsuccessful attempt to dig a Panama Canal, and the Dreyfus case, in which a Jewish officer was convicted, on evidence subsequently proved to be forged, of selling military secrets to Germany, was the occasion of a prolonged and concerted attempt to suppress inquiry into the facts, which was more damaging to the honour of France than the original miscarriage of justice. As for Alsace-Lorraine, it was not forgotten; the symbolic statue of Strasbourg in the centre of Paris was still draped in mourning garb; but *revanche* formed no part of French practical politics, even after the establishment of the Entente, and Alsatian opposition to German rule had become perfunctory and despondent. It is possible to throw a share of the blame for the outbreak of the war upon Russia; it is impossible to throw any on France.

Great Britain, though she had emerged from her diplomatic isolation, was intensely pacific. We were determined to maintain our naval superiority, which

58 A HISTORY OF WESTERN EUROPE  
we very reasonably regarded as an insurance of our own safety, and not at all as a weapon of offence. Most English people took little interest in the recurrent European crises, and regarded threats of war with a scepticism which proved to be misplaced. The notion of Germany as a "national enemy" left them cold. For seventy years Russia had figured as the national enemy, and we had only fought her once, and then, it seemed to be agreed, unnecessarily. Most English people were much more interested in the conflict of Lords and Commons, the development of unprecedented discontent in the great mining and transport industries, the militant suffragist agitation, and the prospect of civil war in Ireland than in anything that was happening on the Continent. Ignorance of the suppressed conflicts raging in Europe was, in general, profound. After the war had begun historians came forward with popular booklets informing a bewildered electorate "Why we are at war." Such booklets would not have been needed in France or Germany; our ignorance is the best proof of our innocence.

In 1911 Germany made a second diplomatic assault upon the French position in Morocco, sending a gunboat to Agadir as martial music to accompany a demand for German compensation in the Congo area. Germany claimed to negotiate with France alone, but Mr. Lloyd George, who had hitherto made light of the German danger, publicly declared that Britain would not allow herself to be treated as "of no account in the Cabinet of Nations." Germany

secured her strip of Congo territory, but the Emperor's gesture was regarded as a failure by his subjects, and he could not afford to fail again. This was the last crisis arising out of a Western occasion, and Germany now devoted herself to securing a friendly understanding with England on the subject of the Baghdad railway. The purpose was no doubt to neutralize England in the forthcoming war, but, successful as in themselves the Baghdad negotiations were, hopes of English neutrality were faint indeed among the better instructed German officials. It was the German people, not their rulers, who were surprised by British intervention in 1914.

In October, 1912, Serbia, Bulgaria, and Greece, miraculously united by the cunning of the Greek statesman Venizelos, declared war upon Turkey, and achieved an astonishing success; most of European Turkey was overrun by the victorious armies. At once a European crisis of the first magnitude arose. Austria and Italy were determined that Serbia should not have Albania, and a Conference of the Powers supported them. Serbia thereupon poached upon Bulgaria's share of the spoil; Greece supported her: both attacked Bulgaria, and the Balkan League vanished as rapidly as it had arisen. Once more, as in the matter of Bosnia, Serbia had been balked by Austria, and Pan-Serb agitation redoubled. In June, 1914, by no means the first of several assassination plots succeeded in killing the heir to the Austrian throne.

The complicity of the Serbian Government was, and is, unproved, but Austria was determined to seize the pretext for war, and Germany gave her a free

hand. On July 23 the famous ultimatum was despatched, and the Serbian reply two days later went to the extreme limit of concession. It seems that at this point some members of the German Government tried to restrain Austria, but others did not. With a weak Chancellor, a distraught Emperor, and soldiers usurping the functions of statesmen, the German Government was in a state of administrative anarchy. Austria now had the bit between her teeth, and declared war on Serbia. The rest was inevitable. Russia began to mobilize, and Germany declared war on her. France began to mobilize, and Germany made the same reply. England, as in 1870, asked for guarantees of the neutrality of Belgium, and when these were refused, declared war on Germany. We had already promised France the assistance of our fleet if the German fleet entered the Straits of Dover, and the Belgian question was the accidental rather than the essential cause of our declaration of war. In the circumstances, we were bound to fight. Belgian neutrality hastened our action, unified the national resolve, and gave our policy a moral justification not more complete, but much more obvious than it would otherwise have been; for all of which we may be profoundly thankful.

CHAPTER IX  
*THE GREAT WAR*  
(1914—1918)

AN attempt to relate the military events of fifty-one crowded months in half a dozen pages could serve no useful purpose, and those events form the subject of a volume by Mr. Douglas Jerrold already published in this Series. Nor should we serve any useful purpose if we bombarded the reader with statistics calculated to prove up to the hilt what he knows already—namely, that the Great War was on an unimaginably bigger scale than all the wars of previous history. It was an altogether unprecedented exhibition of human energy, human destructiveness, and human endurance. Battles were reckoned in weeks and months; indeed, in a very real sense the whole warfare of the Western Front from first to last was a single battle, since the armies, once in contact, were never again out of gunshot of one another. All available man-power was drawn into the armies, and behind the armies whole nations learnt that, under modern conditions, a civilian is by no means a spectator. In this chapter we shall assume that the reader has in his mind at any rate a vague and general outline of the events, and we shall limit ourselves to comments upon certain outstanding features of the story.

The first six weeks of the war showed that, on the military side, Germany was incredibly well prepared. The French, on the other hand, apart from their assumption that Germany would not touch Belgium,

made many mistakes and suffered staggering losses, far worse losses than they suffered in an equal space of time in any later period of the war. On the other hand, is it not possible that Germany's military triumph was her first irreparable mistake? Suppose she had said, in effect, to France: "Our quarrel is with Russia. If you insist on joining her, well and good. We shall defend our frontiers against you." Russia, attacked as France was attacked, would have been driven out of the war. France would have expended her energies in vain against a German defence, and would have appeared as the aggressor. Belgium would have been unviolated. Great Britain would (probably) have remained neutral during these operations. In 1915 Germany would have had France at her mercy, and then——?

Before the end of 1914 Turkey had joined her natural allies; Russian armies had overrun all Austria-Hungary north and east of the Carpathians, though her store of munitions was already dangerously depleted; and in France the Western Front had been stabilized from the sea to Switzerland. All modern battles had been won by flank attacks, and here there were no exposed flanks. What was to be done in 1915? France was clearly pinned to her home front; Russia would need more than all her resources to maintain her gains of the previous autumn. And England, with growing armies and a sea-power capable of transporting them to any quarter of the globe—what was she to do? Here arose the controversy between the "Easterners" and the "Westerners," once conducted in secret conclave of experts, and since 1918 broadcasted in a hundred books and

pamphlets. Some said: "Stick to the Western Front; only there can you win the war." Others said: "In France victory involves the maximum of effort and is at present entirely impossible. Since the enemy's front door is barred and bolted, why not approach his fortress from behind, where he is notoriously weaker. Why not strike through the Dardanelles at Constantinople?" We cannot relate here the long-drawn tragedy of divided and wavering counsels, of the Eastern expedition wrecked by half-measures taken too late, of the entire failure of the offensives in France, of the spectacular defeat of Russia, which destroyed once for all the pathetic and ludicrous faith in "the Russian steam-roller" so widespread among ourselves in the first months of the war. In 1914 the Allies had saved themselves from defeat; in 1915 they threw away their best chance of a comparatively speedy victory.

Another fatality. The Italian people forced their Government into joining the Allies in May, 1915. If they had joined the Allies at the outset, it is not impossible that the combined assault of Russia and Italy upon an Austria as yet unstiffened by Germany (who was busy in France) might have tumbled that "ramshackle empire" to pieces. But when Italy joined, Germany, having entrenched herself in France, was driving the Russians out of Austria. The Italian armies could not break the Austrian defence, and found themselves condemned to years of weary siegework on a continuous Alpine fortress. Bulgaria joined Austria, and Serbia was crushed.

Germany conducted the war in a spirit worthy of her previous diplomacy. We will say nothing of the

Belgian atrocities nor of the introduction of poison gas. In the spring of 1915 the Germans announced their intention of destroying Allied commerce by submarine attack. They had at this date only about two dozen submarines, and the attack was a complete failure, being abandoned in the course of the year. Yet it had two important results. The sinking of the *Lusitania* set going a new train of thought in the United States, but that is not all. The submarine campaign gave a warning that was not lost upon the British Admiralty. Two years later, in 1917, the Germans returned to submarine warfare on commerce with 300 U-boats, and came thereby nearer to winning the war than at any other time before or after. We survived, narrowly, because we had already been warned to study the problem. If we had not been warned——?

1916, the central year of the war, is seen in retrospect to be much less fateful for good or evil than any of the years that preceded or followed it. It was the year of Verdun and the Somme, two tremendous efforts with strictly limited results; the year of Jutland, where Jellicoe refused to run the risk of "losing the war in an afternoon." Roumania joined the Allies, and was compelled to yield her territory to the apparently invincible enemy, and in Greece the struggle of pro-Ally and pro-German factions flared up in civil war; the loss of Kut in Mesopotamia was balanced by the conquest of German East Africa. Each nation, in its war-weariness, grew dissatisfied with its leadership. In England, Lloyd George displaced Asquith; in France, Joffre was about to give place to Nivelle; in Germany, Hindenburg and Ludendorff displaced Falkenhayn, and were soon to



get rid of Bethmann-Hollweg and install a Chancellor who would be merely a mouthpiece of the soldiers; in Russia, the reign of Rasputin was brought to a sensational end, and the fall of the Romanovs was approaching; in America, Wilson's offer of what amounted to arbitration was rejected by the Allies, and the President secured re-election on a policy of strict neutrality.

The military events of 1917 were scarcely more decisive than those of 1916, though they included the distant and picturesque prizes of Jerusalem and Baghdad, but three events, not strictly military, were of overwhelming significance—the great submarine offensive, the entry of America, and the Russian Revolution. Of these the first two were cause and effect; the rulers of Germany knew well enough that the submarines would bring in America, but they held that they could no longer hope to win the war by victory on land, and they hoped to drive England out of the war, or, at any rate, paralyze the supply of munitions before America got her armies into the field; they were not very far from succeeding in this objective. They did not, however, foresee the Russian Revolution. If they had done so, or if it had broken out before the submarine offensive was launched; if they had realized that they would soon be able to transfer all their Eastern armies to France, would they have despaired of military victory? Would they have challenged America? If the offensive of 1918 had been launched against the Western armies without America coming in behind them, how then——?

Of the Russian Revolution an historian of Western Europe is presumably under no obligation to treat; yet

it is well to remember that the Revolution was not, in its origins, Bolshevik. It was fundamentally pacifist, and the Bolsheviks secured power before the end of the year, not so much because they were in possession of the whole gospel of Karl Marx as because they alone were prepared to promise peace at once and on any terms obtainable. The Russian people have never been Europeans; they revolted against a war which inflicted upon them intolerable losses—far surpassing those of any Western ally—for a cause they did not understand. It is strange to remember that, when the Revolution began, most of us persuaded ourselves that now at last Russia would prosecute the war with all her might. Many will deny that they ever cherished this impression, for most of us have conveniently short memories.

The year ended with the small "Tank battle" of Cambrai. Some hold that, next after our failure to exert full pressure on the Dardanelles and Gallipoli in 1915, our worst mistake was our failure to put our money behind the Tank in 1916 and 1917. To-day the orthodox soldiers who discouraged the Tank when it was 'an amateurs' invention are eagerly "mechanizing" the army.

The final German gamble for victory began, not on March 21, 1918, but on October 24, 1917, at Caporetto. The great Italian defeat did not drive Italy out of the war, but it drew reinforcements from the Western Front, and thus served its purpose up to a point.

Of the final battles in France what need be said? Of the three great German attacks, in March at St. Quentin, in April on the Lys, and in May at Soissons, the first was the most formidable and dangerous. It

was, in fact, the greatest offensive ever launched in the whole history of warfare, and it was held by the end of a week. After the third German "victory" the German armies were doomed. Their line was greatly extended, their entrenched positions had been left far behind, their bolt was shot, their reserves exhausted, the Americans were pouring in; our final victory was not "in sight," for none of us saw it, but it was just round the corner. The great advance began, superimposed on the utter failure of the German fourth offensive in mid-July. While the German armies were losing in France, her allies collapsed with more dramatic suddenness—first Bulgaria, then Turkey, then Austria. A new Europe had already begun to emerge. When war began there had been three Emperors in Europe; on November 11, 1918, there were none.

## CHAPTER X

### *THE TREATIES*

(1919—1924)

WE have already covered in this brief narrative a whole cycle of events—one hundred and four years—and are back again at a point curiously like that from which we started. Once again, at the end of an unprecedented war, the statesmen of victorious Allies are assembled in Congress to deal out criminal justice to the authors of

a war, to refashion a shattered world, and to ensure that peace, once made, shall be maintained. The scene is laid in Paris instead of Vienna; the aged and embittered Clemenceau occupies the chair of the cynical and sprightly Metternich; a Welsh solicitor has replaced an Ulster nobleman as the representative of Great Britain; and the element of fervid idealism, brought to Vienna by a Tsar from the despotic East, comes to Paris from the Land of Hope and Glory, and its exponent is a University professor whom the gamble of American politics has transformed into a Democratic President. The principal criminal has not surrendered to the British Navy, and therefore cannot be transported to St. Helena; he has ensconced himself in neutral territory, but there is brave talk of his extraction, and five hundred respectable English politicians have just secured election to the House of Commons on a programme in which the most taking item was the Hanging of the Kaiser.

We said on an earlier page that many have blamed and few have praised the treaties of 1815, and the same may be said of the treaties we now have to examine. The fact is, post-war treaties are made in circumstances that almost inevitably entail their inadequacy, and the greater the war the worse the treaty is likely to be. War is so painful an experience that, while it lasts, we console ourselves for our sufferings by persuading ourselves that they will be compensated by all kinds of future benefits. War is a political and social disease, yet we prefer to figure it to ourselves as a kind of surgical operation. We expect to be better when it is over than we were when it began. During the long years of fighting many people said that this was a

"war to end war," that it was not merely a war against Germany and her allies, but against something called militarism. Some assumed that Germany and her allies were the only States that had been guilty of militarism, and that their complete defeat would secure the end in view. Others, better informed, knew that militarism was an ancient and deep-rooted vice of nations, and that past history showed none to be wholly free from it, but they hoped that victors and vanquished alike would have learnt wisdom.

The benefits of the war were, in fact, expected to be not utterly unworthy of its sufferings. The soldiers and sailors had done their part by reducing the enemy to complete prostration; it remained for the statesmen by their treaty-making to do the rest. Yet treaties of peace are inevitably made under the most unfavourable conditions. The passions of war are still rife. Moreover, haste is imperative; the first need is peace, and there can be no real peace till the treaty has been signed. Under such circumstances it is idle to expect from a peace congress a monument of political wisdom.

One man, no doubt, seemed to millions in that winter of the Armistice the embodiment of the wisdom which the world needed as the balm for its wounds. President Wilson seemed to combine all the incompatible merits of a victor and a neutral. The man who had once been "too proud to fight" was still presumably too proud to consent to a peace of barren vengeance. He viewed Europe from a distance, and ought to be able to see it as a whole; he had spoken, not once nor twice, of a League of Nations, and surely that was exactly what was wanted. He seemed to be Plato's philosopher-king on a scale appropriate to

70 . A HISTORY OF WESTERN EUROPE  
the modern world. Unfortunately, whereas Plato's philosopher-king was (if I remember right) to undergo a lifelong training for his duties, Wilson had no equipment at all for the tasks now confronting him. His ignorance of Europe was supreme, surpassing that of Mr. Lloyd George; and surely one of the strangest features of the Peace Congress is that England and America were represented by statesmen who had never given any serious attention to foreign affairs until after the war had begun. We had done better than that in 1815 when we sent Castlereagh to Vienna, and we had another Castlereagh available in 1919 in the person of Lord Grey.

Over against Wilson was Clemenceau, a very old man with bitter memories of 1870. To him the League of Nations, the "new world," "justice not vengeance," "the outlawry of war," and all the rest of the new-fangled jargon were mere moonshine. His aim was to secure, so far as in him lay, the utter ruin of the country that must always be the enemy of France. In old days, when Germany was divided, France had the natural advantage. Now, when Germany was united and would soon have a population double that of France, Germany had the natural advantage. The object of the treaty should be to cripple Germany. If Wilson insisted upon his League of Nations, he should have it; it would be allowed to do no harm. If Lloyd George persuaded himself and his supporters that Germany could be made to pay for all the damage she had done, then let the treaty include a fantastic scheme of "reparations"; they would not be paid, of course, but they would cripple German finance and give France a legal right to remain in occupation of

German territory. Such was the policy of Clemenceau, and in the main it determined the character of the treaty with Germany. Happily it could not, in the long run, control the international habits and outlook of the post-war world. Wilson returned home a defeated and humiliated man, and in America further defeat and humiliation awaited him. Yet he had forced the Covenant of the League into the forefront of the treaty, and it may be that he had sown the seeds of ultimate victory for his cause. As General Smuts said at the time, the real peace would be found, not in the terms of the treaty so much as in the machinery it erected for its own revision.

With the utmost brevity we must now summarize those terms. Germany surrendered Alsace and Lorraine; she made over to France the coal mines of the Saar Valley (north of Alsace), the Saar Province itself being handed over for fifteen years to commissioners of the League of Nations. On the east, Germany surrendered extensive territories to the new kingdom of Poland, and, on the north, a small strip of Schleswig to Denmark. She lost the whole of her colonial empire, the colonies being entrusted to various Allies under mandates from the League of Nations. Under these arrangements, German East Africa, for example, fell to Great Britain, South-West Africa to the British Union of South Africa, and Togoland and the Cameroons to France. Conscription was to be abolished in Germany, and the army reduced to 100,000. The navy was reduced to six battleships with certain minor craft, but no submarines. These measures were to be followed by some measure of general reduction of armaments, which the Allies reserved to their own

72 A HISTORY OF WESTERN EUROPE  
discretion—and they have been discreet. Germany was forbidden to maintain armed forces or fortifications within thirty miles of the right bank of the Rhine, and for fifteen years all territory to the left of the Rhine, with certain “bridge-heads” beyond it, was to remain in Allied occupation as security for the carrying out of the treaty.

The sum total due from Germany as reparations was not assessed by the authors of the treaty, but the phrase in the Armistice terms about all damage done to the civilian population of the Allies “by land, by sea, and from the air,” was interpreted, very absurdly, to include all separation allowances paid to the wives of those serving with the Allied forces. The sum total, however estimated, would be enormously in excess of any indemnity ever previously imposed and quite beyond Germany’s capacity of payment at any future date. The reparations problem remained a running sore for several years to come, poisoning the atmosphere of peace. In 1923, France, in desperation, invaded the Ruhr coalfield, and the German currency collapsed. Once again a statesman of the New World came to the rescue of the Old, and an international commission, under the presidency of General Dawes, established a system of moderate and workable reparation payments.

The Germans had been excluded from all share in the construction of the treaty. When it was presented to them they declared it to be a breach of faith, in that it did not accord with President Wilson’s Fourteen Points as embodied in the terms of the Armistice. In fact, they declared that, if the war began with the tearing up of one scrap of paper, it ended with



another. Perhaps they were right; and, if we ought to feel ashamed, their assumption of righteous indignation was more than a little ludicrous. The treaty was, in fact, apart from the Covenant of the League, incongruously but most fortunately prefixed to it, an integral part of the war, and bore the marks of war-time passion. If we are to forgive the war, the Germans must forgive the treaty. Not through the war and the treaty, but in spite of them both, the new world for which idealists prayed and soldiers died has to be created.

We have no space here to relate the "Balkanization" of Austria-Hungary, which has substituted a crowd of jostling national States for an obsolete Great Power; nor can we describe the abortive Treaty of Sèvres and its successful defiance by Turkey. The East is recovering from its respect for the West, and the victories of Mustapha Kemal belong to the same order of events as Swaraj in India and Kuomintang in China; but they are none of them "Western Europe." We pass to Italy.

Italy was but little concerned with the German question, and her old enemy, Austria-Hungary, had vanished from the map; her interest was the Adriatic, and her rival was her ex-ally, Yugoslavia. When Italy joined the Allies in 1915 she had driven a hard bargain, and the secret Treaty of London gave her not only the Trentino and Trieste, but also the Dalmatian coast. But Dalmatia has a Yugoslav population, and the Yugoslav protests at Paris in 1919 found a backer in President Wilson. In 1919, however, nothing succeeded like success, and the poet-airman, D'Annunzio, a forerunner of the Fascist Revolution, seized Fiume on

74 .A HISTORY OF WESTERN EUROPE  
behalf of his country and in defiance of his government. Italy and Jugoslavia settled the northern Adriatic question for themselves by the Treaty of Rapallo in 1920; Zara and, ultimately, Fiume went to Italy, but the rest of Dalmatia to Jugoslavia. Since that date their rivalry has centred round the control of the backward little State of Albania. Post-war Europe is full of Naboths' vineyards, and often there are several rival Ahabs after each of them.

## CHAPTER XI

### *BEGINNINGS*

(1918—1926)

OF the three Great Powers of Western Europe, France alone, like England, is governed to-day as she was governed before the war; indeed, her two principal post-war statesmen, Poincaré and Briand, have a long and notable pre-war record. The chief problems of France have been finance and relations with Germany. Briand failed to check the tendency of the franc to follow in the footsteps of the mark, but afterwards succeeded in effecting the Locarno agreement with Germany; Poincaré must bear the blame for the moral and material blunder of the occupation of the Ruhr, but afterwards he saved and stabilized the franc. Thus each succeeded where the other failed; together they

have deserved well of their country and of Europe. Briand is an eloquent and dexterous politician who has often been compared with Lloyd George. For Poincaré it seems harder to parallel; he is somewhat grim and dour, but his courage and honesty inspire confidence.

The German Republic was born on the eve of the Armistice; like the French Republic of 1870, it was the offspring of defeat. When Hindenburg persuaded the Kaiser to abdicate and leave the country, all the minor thrones of Germany collapsed together. Military monarchy, says a German writer, "died without a death struggle, like an oil-lamp that goes out for lack of oil, without a breath of air to blow it out." While the Allied statesmen were devising their treaties at Paris, the new leaders of Germany were suppressing the Bolsheviks in their midst and constructing a republican constitution. German republicans like to regard their republic as a fulfilment of the ideals of the Frankfort Parliament of 1848; to them the Bismarckian Hohenzollern Empire was an intrusion upon the proper course of German development, a mere episode that is now over and done with. Perhaps half the population, however, are still monarchists at heart, but there is no eligible monarch. Like the equally numerous monarchists of France in the early days of the Third Republic, most of them are loyal to the republic as at least a temporary expedient, and foremost among such is the second President of the Republic, Hindenburg himself. During the war Hindenburg was, we are often told, a mere puppet in the hands of Ludendorff; since the war he has shown himself a very different and much greater man. History will honour this old soldier who has put

country before party and risen superior to the prejudices of the military aristocracy from which he sprang. As soon as the Republic was proclaimed he placed his services at the disposal of the socialist saddler, Ebert, who was head of the provisional government and afterwards the first Chancellor. When Ebert died in 1924, and Hindenburg was elected to succeed him as the nominee of the monarchists, English and French opinion regarded his election as a European misfortune. Foreign opinion was, however, mistaken, for Hindenburg's election was the best thing that could have happened; it has given the German monarchists a share in the Republic. With it, and with the Dawes Agreement and the establishment of the new currency, both accomplished in the same year, the restoration of Germany to her normal place among the Great Powers was begun. In 1925 came the Locarno Treaty, whereby France, Germany, and Great Britain agreed to respect for ever the present Franco-German frontier. In 1926 Germany was admitted to the League of Nations with the rank of a Great Power. At last the organization of peace was begun in earnest.

If Germany has undone much of the work of Bismarck, Italy has undone much of the work of Cavour. Cavour's parliamentarism has proved a failure as surely as Bismarck's militarism. Military defeat proved fatal to the latter; post-war bankruptcy and anarchy brought down the former. Fascism began, in the black months that followed the disaster of Caporetto, as a movement to maintain Italian perseverance in the war. From being anti-pacifist it became, when post-war communism raised its head, anti-socialist. When the weak parliamentary ministries

temporized with the communists it became anti-parliamentary. In October, 1922, the Black Shirts marched on Rome, and Mussolini, accepted as Prime Minister by King Victor Emmanuel II., has, since that date, ruled Italy. Fascism is a form of Bonapartism; it stands for efficiency under the rule of a dictator, who, if not elected by democratic methods, claims to represent the national will. It despises liberalism and parliamentarism. Like Bonapartism, it believes in a vigorous foreign policy; indeed, Mussolini, with his warlike gestures, is the only figure in Europe to-day who occasionally reminds us of the ex-Kaiser, and his warmest admirers outside Italy must occasionally be thankful that he has not an army like the old German army at his beck and call. If France is drawing nearer to Germany, she is also drifting farther from Italy, and both Italy and France cultivate the support of rival groups among the small States of Central and South-Eastern Europe. All, in fact, is not yet well with international relations. How strange if it were! But things are not as bad as they easily might be, and are sometimes pessimistically represented to be. We have the League of Nations.

To end with a homily on the League of Nations might displease the reader, for he has probably read too many homilies on the subject already. Yet the League is the cardinal fact of post-war Europe. It is not, as some people seem so oddly to suppose, a pacifist missionary society; the League of Nations is the Nations—Leagued. It is a piece of machinery for international co-operation; not perfect, but far the best ever yet devised, a piece of machinery which the governments of the nations may use, or not use, or

abuse—at their peril. It has failed to perform miracles, but it has already done a great deal of useful work. It has organized international assistance to three countries on the verge of bankruptcy, and settled half a dozen considerable disputes. It has brought the statesmen of many nations face to face with one another as colleagues and friends. Statesmen learn to trust each other at Geneva, and go home and tell their colleagues. This may seem a small and simple matter, but it is not, for mutual trust is the foundation of peace. Many difficult problems lie ahead. Many of the territorial awards of 1919, for example, were biassed in favour of the victors or their clients, and cannot permanently stand. Austria has valid claims to some territorial repayment from Italy, Germany from Poland, Bulgaria from Yugoslavia, Hungary from several of her neighbours. To suppose that these repayments will never be made is to erect the inevitable unwisdom of 1919 into a law of the Medes and Persians; but to press for repayments at once, when the remedy would almost certainly be worse than the disease, would be most unwise. A series of mid-century wars corrected the settlements of 1815. The settlements of 1919 will also be corrected; the all-important question for the future is the method to be employed.



